



Protecting Children from Environmental Threats

Protecting Indiana's children from environmental threats has been a fundamental element of IDEM's mission to make Indiana a cleaner, healthier place to live. As part of Governor Frank O'Bannon's Building Bright Beginnings campaign, IDEM developed its Protecting Children From Environmental Threats campaign with the goals of educating families, involving children and reducing toxics in the environment. Since its creation in 1997, IDEM's campaign has helped protect the health of thousands of Hoosier children through activities such as:

- Informing Hoosiers about the health and environmental risks of mercury
- Providing families with free home lead assessments and educational materials
- Recognizing child care facilities that go beyond health, safety and environmental regulations
- Educating students about environmental issues

Lead Awareness

One out of nine children tested in Indiana has an elevated blood lead

level. Lead exposure can inhibit children's emotional, intellectual and physical growth. Working with the Indiana Department of Health, IDEM has trained more than 100 lead assessors who have performed lead assessments at homes and child care facilities throughout Indiana. In addition, local governments in at-risk counties have received grants totaling \$106,000 for lead awareness, outreach and education.

Mercury Awareness Program

Mercury is a widely used toxin that can threaten the central nervous system and cause serious, irreversible damage to sight, hearing and motor skills. IDEM and the Regional Household Hazardous Waste Task Force joined forces in October 1998 to create the Mercury Awareness Program (MAP). Through June 1999, IDEM committed more than \$200,000 to fund a full-time coordinator and the collection and recycling of mercury. During this time, MAP held mercury collection events in all 92 Indiana counties, collected more than 2,000 pounds of mercury, and developed ongoing mercury collection and education programs in 84 Indiana counties.

5-Star Environmental Recognition for Child Care Facilities

The first child care facility recognition program of its kind in the United States, IDEM's 5-Star Environmental Recognition for Child Care Facilities recognizes child care facilities that go beyond environmental, health and safety regulations. IDEM has recognized 48 facilities in the first two rounds of awards and released a child care facility compliance guidance manual.

Environmental Education

Environmental education and awareness are critical to ensuring that future generations understand the value of Indiana's natural resources. IDEM provides schools across the state with environmental education materials and is involved in data collection projects in which more than 4,000 students participate.

- Performed home and child care facility lead assessments
- Collected 2,000 lbs. of mercury in 92 counties
- Recognized 48 child care facilities for environmental practices

